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ABSTRACT

This resource guide, which focuses on the "Brooklynites" section of Brooklyn's Historical Museum, provides the means for teachers to explore Brooklyn's (New York) multicultural heritage in greater depth. The activities replicate techniques used by folklorists and local historians to help students gain insight into the culture and history of Brooklyn. Students will come to recognize that they themselves are bearers of family and community traditions that are worthy of study. All of the lessons and activities in this guide may be adapted to the experiences of any individual of any ethnic and cultural background. Definitions and discussion of folklore, ethnicity, material culture, local history, and primary sources prepare the reader for detailed considerations of: (1) immigration and settlement patterns; (2) foodways; (3) folk art; (4) festivals and folklore; and (5) the built environment (urban buildings). A selected annotated bibliography lists three sources for teachers and four for students. Seven activity sheets are attached. (SLD)

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ED 368 804

Multi-Cultural Diversity of Brooklyn
A Guide for Teachers

The Brooklyn Historical Society

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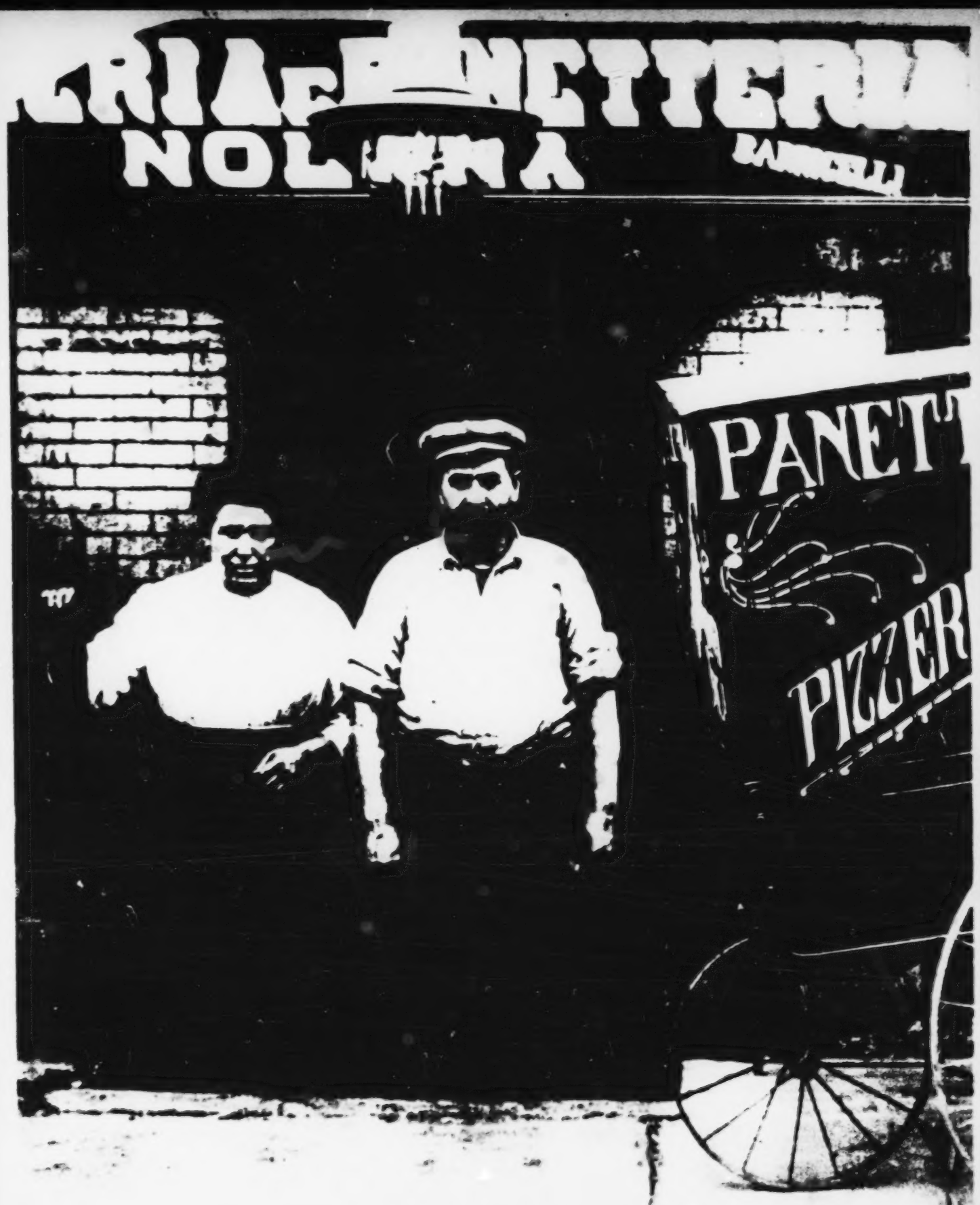

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Williamsburg, Brooklyn c.1905 photograph courtesy of Dr. Louis C. Barricelli, *The Brooklyn Historical Society*.

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Introduction

The program entitled "Many Faces, Many Ways" focuses on the "Brooklynites" section of Brooklyn's History Museum. This resource guide provides the means for teachers to explore Brooklyn's multi-cultural diversity in greater depth. Activities replicate techniques used by folklorists and local historians such as oral histories, object reading and neighborhood walks. Students will gain insights into the complex culture and history of Brooklyn and realize how their own beliefs, traditions and shared memories have shaped Brooklyn.

Students will also:

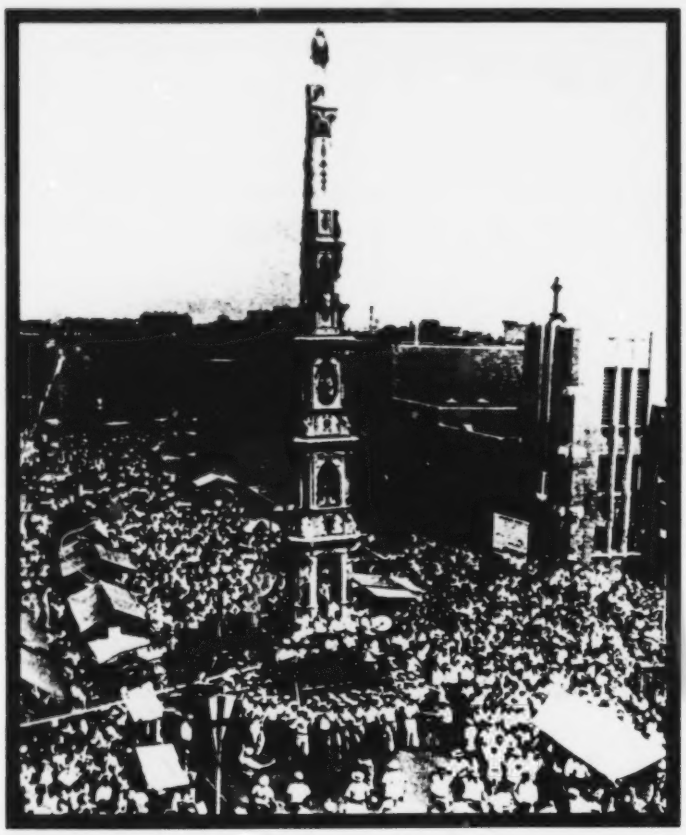
- develop fieldwork skills such as listening, interviewing, documenting, and recording.
- learn to appreciate the cultural expressions of their families and communities.
- recognize that they themselves are the bearers of family and community traditions which are worthy of study.
- learn that history can be immediate and vital, with relevance to their own lives.
- appreciate the cultural diversity of Brooklyn and increase pride in their own ethnic heritage.
- gain respect for traditional arts and artists in their communities.
- become familiar with local history, geography, and immigration patterns.

A young participant in Brooklyn's West Indian-American Carnival that takes place every Labor Day on Eastern Parkway. *Photograph by Roberta Grobel Intrater.*

All of the lessons and activities in the guide may be adapted to the experiences of any individual, of any ethnic or cultural background. However, the teacher should be flexible in defining the limits of folk culture, as there may be some students whose folk culture is not readily apparent. They should be encouraged to look beyond the definitions in each chapter, to find their personal expressions of folklore.

Terms and Techniques

This section includes general terms and research techniques that will be used frequently throughout this resource guide.



Dancing the Giglio in 1956, photo courtesy of Thomas "Polack" Bello. *The Brooklyn Historical Society.*

Folklore

The term "folklore" refers to the traditional cultural expressions ("lore") of a particular group of people ("folk"). This group may be bound by family, age, occupation, nationality, or ethnicity. The categories ("genres") of lore include tales, legends, songs, art, crafts, food, celebrations, and games, among many others.

Lore is passed by word of mouth, imitation, or demonstration, from one person to another in the same folk group. It is not something learned formally in books or from a teacher, but by absorbing the traditions that

are going on at work, in one's family, and among other people of one's own background.

Folklore can be very old, having been passed down from generation to generation. Often, some aspects of the traditions vary as they get passed down, but they always have ties to the older ways.

"Many Faces, Many Ways" explores some of the unique and vital forms of folklore found in Brooklyn, within both the family and the community. From Africa-American storytellers (griots) to Italian celebrants dancing the Giglio, to Puerto Rican lacemakers, folklore flourishes in Brooklyn and contributes to the cultural diversity that is so prominent a feature of the borough.

Activities

Children are a folk group themselves, with their own games, sayings, fashion statements, and traditions common only to other children.

Skelly on a Brooklyn Street. Stickball, stooptag, and skelly are all games played on the street. They require little planning or equipment, making it easy for players to move when city traffic demands it. Photograph by Martha Cooper/ City Lore, 1983.

Examples of children's folklore:

Sayings

Jump Rope Jingles

Secret Codes

Tongue Twisters

Birthday Party Traditions

Children's folklore can be viewed, learned, and "collected" just like that of any other group.

Have students do Activity Sheet #1 about a game they enjoy. Afterwards, they will understand how accessible and close to their own experiences the study of folklore can be.

Activity sheets are in back of this guide.

Back in the Classroom

Discuss the results of the activity sheets. What patterns emerge? What did students find out about the game they chose in relation to others?

Have students make a list of other genres of children's folklore they could "collect" just as they did for games.

Ethnicity

An ethnic group is any group of people bound together by race, nationality, religion, language, or cultural background. Today, over 90 ethnic groups can be found in Brooklyn, and each group has its own traditions and folklore. Some of the most prominent among these are Italian, West Indian, Hispanic, and Chinese, although this list is by no means definitive. Your class may be composed of students from these or any number of other ethnic groups.

Many people are proud of their heritage and reflect it through their ethnic folklore, or traditions and customs of their cultural background.

Consuelo de Passos models a Mexican folk costume from her extensive collection, in her Carroll Gardens home. *The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Tony Velez.*

The expression of ethnic folklore provides people with a sense that they belong to a cohesive group with shared traditions, past and present. It can also instill a personal sense of pride in one's own heritage. This is

not always the case, however; attempts have often been made to "Americanize" new immigrants. Despite the importance placed today on "multi-cultural" values, some people are still reluctant to identify with their ethnic groups.

Activity

Have students discuss which folk groups they identify with. Are any of these ethnic groups? How do they express this identification—through language? Foods? Social customs?

Material Culture

Material culture refers to all the tangible things of our culture (household objects, clothing, foods, architecture, art, etc.) Folklorists and historians often look at objects to learn about the people who used them and their worlds, past and present.

A 19th century apple peeler can reveal a lot about life in pre-industrial American society. At first glance, the peeler is nothing more than an iron gadget. But by asking the right questions, one can see the broader context in which the peeler is used, and the values by which people lived:

- Who used this utensil?
- Why was it used?
- What can it do that could not be done before it was invented?
- What products could be made with an apple peeler?
- Do we use these products today?
- Do we need an apple peeler to obtain these products?
- Were other products made at home in the 19th century?
- What is the apple peeler made out of?
- How was it made?
- What kinds of materials do we use today to make kitchen utensils?

Asking the right questions combined with guided research will begin to unravel the relationship between domestic life and industry in the 19th century. This process of questioning, speculating and research inspired

by any object, no matter how mundane or exotic, can lead one to a deeper understanding of any period in history.

In the absence of objects themselves, old mail-order catalogues are excellent resources for the study of material culture.

More specific forms of material culture are "material folk traditions." These are the tangible expressions that reflect a folk culture. Among other genres, such traditions include folk arts and crafts (for example, quilts, textiles, toys, puppets, musical instruments and clothing). These objects may be for every day use, such as African dashikis or for special occasions, such as a West Indian Carnival costume.

MacDonalds Box
Coca Cola bottle
High-top sneakers
Baseball cards
Chopsticks
African cloth
Menorah
Embroidery

Activities

Have students distinguish between popular material culture and folk traditions.

Bring in samples of both types of objects or refer to the list to the left.

Choose one sample from the folk objects selection. Make a list of the questions one might ask to understand more about the culture it represents. Try to answer some of these questions.

Sample Questions: Who uses it?
What is it made of? When is it used?
Who made it? How is it put together?

Local History

Local history refers to the study of one's own surroundings, past, and present. Most often, the study of history involves events on a national or global scale (such as the American Revolution), which may not be clearly related to students' lives. Local history brings the past closer to home. By studying their immediate environment, students will gain an understanding of why their neighborhoods look the way they do, why things are done a certain way, how they are personally affected by their

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environment and ultimately, how they can impact the future of their communities.

Questions arise in examining one's own neighborhood: Why is one building style used in one area as opposed to another? Why is brick prevalent in one part of the neighborhood and brownstone in another? Does material use reflect the age or function of a building, or the availability of a particular material? Is it an aesthetic statement of the year in which it was built? Why are some parts of the neighborhood still standing while other sections have been destroyed? By making connections among such clues from the past, students will better understand the present, and, by extension, have a sense that they have a stake in their future.

Activities

Have students explore their own homes from the point of view of a local historian.

Ask them to answer the following:

- What kind of building do you live in? (Single-family dwelling, high-rise, project, brownstone, etc.)
- When was it built?
- Are there any additions that were added later? What are they?
- What materials are used on and in the building?
- How many stories does it have?
- How many families live there, approximately?
- Does it have any special features? (Elevators? Stairways? Laundry facilities? Balconies? Porches? Anything else?)
- Did the building used to be something other than a residence? What was it? When did it change functions?
- Describe the outside space. Is there a yard? Lawn? Courtyard? Alley? Parking Space?
- What kind of street is it on? (Busy two-way street? Dead-end? Avenue?)
- Are there other buildings just like it close by? (Are they identical or just similar?)

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Is there anything else you'd like to know about your building? How could you find this out?

Back in the Classroom

Have the students create a mural of their houses. As a group, decide which buildings will be next to one another? What setting will they be in?

Think about using different materials on the mural to represent building materials. (Sand paper, aluminum foil, glossy paper, brown paper, etc.)

Primary Sources

A "primary source" is a first-hand or eyewitness account of an event. In contrast, a secondary source such as a history book, is written by someone who has interpreted the past from a more recent vantage point and/or has not directly experienced the event. An event may range from something as simple as playing stickball on a summer evening, to the experience of immigrating to Brooklyn from another place.

Examining primary sources is a good way to become familiar with the quantitity of resources which can shed light on local history. It also reinforces the concept that everyone has a unique perspective from which to view the world.

Page from the ship's log of Captain Michael Shellens, clipper ship captain and Bay Ridge resident, c. 1900. ***The Brooklyn Historical Society.***

Activities

Bring in a collection of primary AND secondary sources you have available. Have students determine which is which, or, use the following list:

- A photograph of your grandmother in 1955 standing in front of a car.
- Your grandmother saying, "In 1955, when your mother was born, we bought a brand new, beautiful Oldsmobile. It went extremely fast."
- A book about life in the 1950s written in 1988 by a 25-year-old.

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Examples of Primary Sources:

Oral Histories: A verbal account, usually including the speaker's personal memories of experiences in the past. An oral history is often taped by the listener/interviewer.

Photographs: A visual primary source. We can learn a lot about the past just by looking at what people wore, and where and how they posed.

Diaries and Letters: Personal written accounts of individual lives can make history come alive in a very powerful way; who is not interested in the daily concerns and feelings of a real person who lived during another time?

Maps: Geographical changes over the years and place names reveal and reflect historical events.

Birth Certificates and Census Records: Individual and general records of demographic trends can substantiate such events as overpopulation, famine, and immigration, etc.

Can you think of any other documents that could be considered primary sources?

- A letter from your grandmother to your mother when she was in camp in 1965.
- An encyclopedia entry on the automobile.

It is helpful to familiarize students with the concept that history is subjective interpretations of the distant and recent past.

Choose one simple school event that the students have recently observed or experienced.

Suggested events:

- Taking a bus on a field trip.
- Playing a game in gym class.
- Doing a science experiment.
- Attending an assembly program.

Have the students write descriptions of what happened during the specific event. Read their descriptions aloud. Discuss how the accounts differ in terms of content and emphasis. How might a historian, 100 years from now, reinterpret the event based on these primary sources and his/her vantage point of the future?

Immigration and Settlement Patterns

Everyone in Brooklyn, unless they are of Native American descent, has either close relatives or distant ancestors who have emigrated from other parts of the world. Some Brooklynites have emigrated here themselves. Brooklyn is a culturally rich place, representing over 90 ethnic groups each with a unique immigration history and legacy. Understanding immigration and settlement patterns, both general and personal can provide insights into Brooklyn's local history and folklore.

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Activities

Immigration: A Personal Look Have students conduct an oral history with a close relative (parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle). Use Activity Sheets #2 and #3.

Choose a relative with whom you feel comfortable asking questions about their own—or their parents' or grandparents'—immigration to this country and settlement in Brooklyn. (Note that *immigrate* means to enter and reside in a country of which one is not a native; *emigrate* means to leave one's own country to live elsewhere.)

You may use a tape recorder to do this interview. This would enable you to capture the storyteller's own words. Or you may decide to simply take notes as you chat. Whichever you decide, you will probably learn something about your family history that you never knew before. Try to get as much information from your relative as you can. Later, you can interview another relative, perhaps from the other side of the family, or of another generation. See how many stories you can gather. They all have some bearing on how you got to where you are today!

Classroom Population The classroom is a microcosm of the population of your Brooklyn neighborhood. In these activities, students can verbally and visually compare their backgrounds with others in the class. They will see themselves and their histories in the broader context of the neighborhood and of Brooklyn as a whole.

Discuss the student's oral histories. What did they find out about their families' immigration experiences? Share these stories informally as a group.

Have each student locate their family's country/ies of origin on a world map. Have them locate their family and neighborhood on a map of Brooklyn.

Chart the findings.

Analyze the chart: How many nationalities are represented? How do the stories shared in discussion correlate with the countries of origin? Is there an experience more common among one nationality than the others?

Detail of a map from Appleton's Dictionary of New York and its vicinity, 1884. Reprinted from Brooklyn Almanac, edited by Margaret Latimer. Brooklyn Rediscovery. *Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance.*

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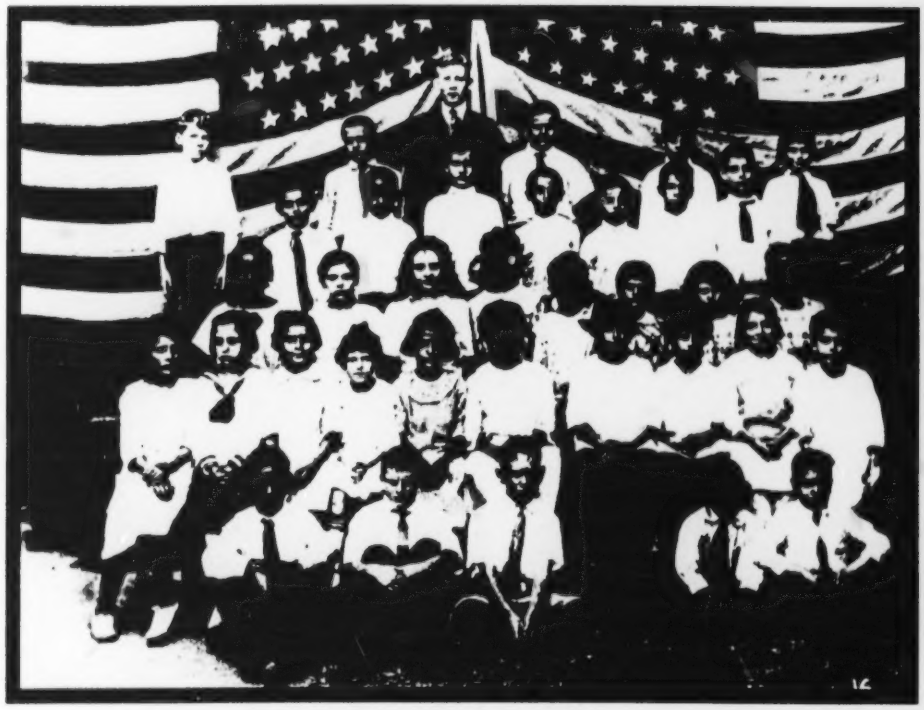

Third grade class, 1921, probably Bedford-Stuyvesant. *The Brooklyn Historical Society.*

Personal Time Line To introduce the next few activities, students may find it helpful to create their own time line.

Start from today, and going backwards, think of some important events that have happened to you or to members of your family. What year did each event occur?

Put them on a time line. Illustrate it if you want!

Look over the next section on Brooklyn's Waves of Immigration. Think about how events on your personal time line and other events in history relate to events in Brooklyn's immigration history.

Some events to include on your time line might be:

Today's date

The year you were born

The year your brother/sister was born

A special "first time" (first tooth lost, first two-wheeler)

Your first day of school

The year your mother/father/grandmother/grandfather was born

The year you moved

The year your family/ancestors immigrated

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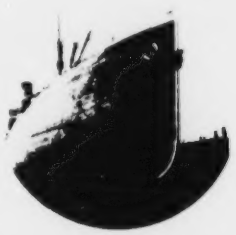
Population of Brooklyn

Year	Total
1698	2,017
1703	1,912
1712	1,925
1723	2,218
1731	2,150
1737	2,348
1746	2,331
1749	2,283
1756	2,207
1771	3,623
1790	4,495
1800	5,740
1810	8,303
1820	11,187
1825	14,679
1830	20,535
1835	32,057
1840	47,613
1845	78,691
1850	138,882
1855	216,355
1860	279,122
1865	311,090
1870	419,921
1875	509,154
1880	599,495
1890	838,547
1900	1,166,582
1910	1,634,351
1920	2,018,356
1930	2,560,401
1940	2,698,285
1950	2,738,175
1960	2,627,319
1970	2,602,012
1980	2,230,936

Brooklyn's Waves of Immigration Your family's immigration history is one small though important part of Brooklyn's immigration history which occurred in a series of "waves." These waves began with the first Dutch settlers and still continue, with varying intensity, to the immigrants who are currently settling in Brooklyn today.

Look at the population chart to the left, taken from the United States Census (1698–1980).

- Between which years did the largest wave of immigration occur?
- In what year was Brooklyn's population at its peak?
- What was the population in that year?



1636
Dutch settlers established first European colonies in Brooklyn at "Flatlands" and what is now Downtown Brooklyn.

1855
Germans represent 19% of foreign-born people in Brooklyn. Emigration from Germany was due in part to crop failures, land division, over-population, and religious persecution.

1890
Crop failures led Scandinavians to emigrate and settle in Sunset Park, or "Goat Hill," on the waterfront. They pursued jobs in shipbuilding, a traditional Scandinavian craft.

1845–54
The Great Potato Famine in Ireland resulted in 1.5 million Irish emigrating to the US.

1880
Many Polish immigrants settled around the Brooklyn waterfront, where jobs were plentiful.

1900–20
Italians emigrate to the fleeing poverty, ov population, and econ depression in Italy

Brooklyn Time Line Look at the following milestones in Brooklyn's immigration history. How do they relate to the population chart? What events affected your neighborhood the most? What other dates can you add to the time line that relate to Brooklyn's immigration history?

1970's
After the Soviet government eased immigration policies, about 30,000 Russian immigrants settle in Brighton Beach.

1920–40
Many Sephardic Jews from Syria and Lebanon settled in Flatbush

1900–20
"The Great Migration". Brooklyn's Black population grew with the migration of rural Southern Blacks fleeing a bad Southern economy.

1945
Puerto Rican immigrants in Brooklyn settle predominantly in Sunset Park and Williamsburg.

1981
The beginning of martial law in Poland encouraged thousands of Poles to emigrate to Brooklyn. Many settled in Greenpoint, along the industrial waterfront.

1905
The Williamsburg Bridge was built between the Lower East Side, Manhattan, and Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Many recent Eastern European Jewish immigrants entered the clothing industry in these neighborhoods. They had used these skills originally in Europe.

1939–45
During World War II, the Norwegian community in Bay Ridge peaked at 40,000.

1960's
The West Indian population in Brooklyn begins to grow significantly. Most settle in Crown Heights and Bedford Stuyvesant.

1980's
The Chinese population in Brooklyn rises from 25,000 in 1980 to 60,000 in 1987. Many settle in Sunset Park, an easy subway ride to Chinatown.

1989
18% of all Brooklynites are Hispanic.

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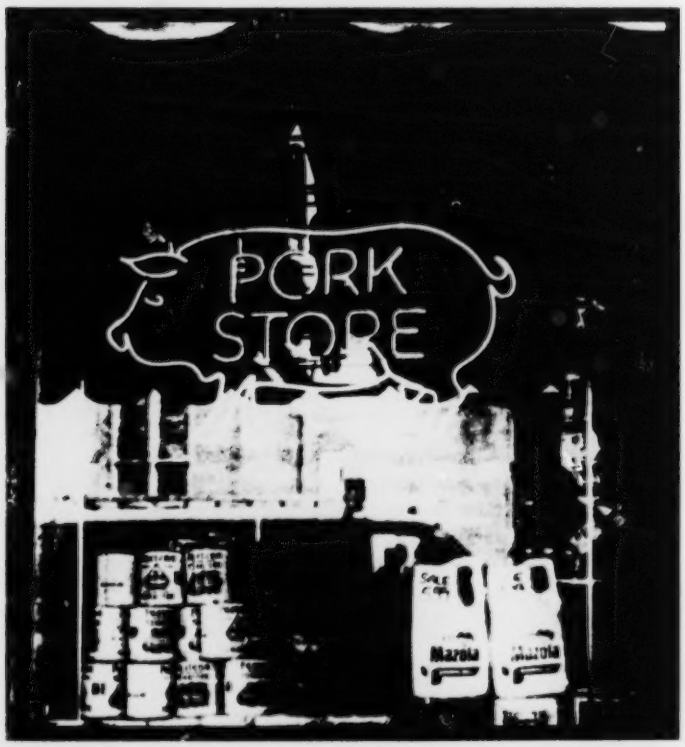
Foodways: From Arroz to Zeppole

One way to explore the folklore of both your own family and that of Brooklyn's ethnic groups is through "foodways," traditions of preparing and eating certain foods. Many of these foods that originate in other countries remain solely a part of their community, without becoming part of the diet of the surrounding culture. (How many non-Norwegians eat salt lamb?) Other ethnic foods have become part of Brooklynites' regular diet . . . do you know anyone who has never eaten pizza or Chinese food?

Family Foodways

Individual families have certain traditions involving food. We recognize some of these traditions because they are eaten on special occasions, such as holidays or birthdays. We eat others as a matter of course, rarely stopping to wonder where they originate from or why our friend's family does not eat them.



Butcher Shop, Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. ***The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Amy Curtis.***

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Contributed by: Johain Rivera
Recipe by: My aunt Elvira
Rice Pudding (arroz Con Dulce)
Country: Puerto Rico
cinammon (4 spoons)
ginger (2 spoons)
Coconut (1 whole)
milk (1 can)
Sugar (2 pounds)
clove (7)
raisins (1 big box)
Small rice (3 pounds)
1 cup of butter
1 spoon of vanilla

Put the 3 pounds of rice one night before. Next day you throw away the water. All the ingredients in one big pot. Wait until it boils Then put in the rice and every 10 minutes you stirr till its done.

My traditional food is called arroz Dulce (Rice Pudding). This tradition is served on Christmas. It is from Puerto Rico. My two Grandmothers and aunt do it the best.

Activities

Think about your favorite foods from when you were younger, or the meals you eat frequently at home, or those prepared only for special occasions.

Make a list of traditional foods prepared in your home.

Pick a food from the list that you would like to know more about. Find out from a parent or grandparent if the recipe is one that has been passed down through the family over generations. In not, ask if he/she knows the history of a traditional family recipe.

Conduct an interview to find out as much as you can about the history of this recipe.

Use Activity Sheet #4.

Back in the Classroom

Have the students bring in their collected recipes. Share them informally and compare the findings:

- Were any recipes the same?
- Were there variations on the same recipe from family to family?
- Are there any that are unfamiliar to students?
- Are there any unusual ingredients or cooking techniques?

Try some of these recipes . . . either prepare yours at home and contribute to a class feast, or choose one or two to prepare as a class, using traditional cooking techniques.

How Does it Taste?

Design a class cookbook. Each student can contribute a page containing the recipe they have collected at home, along with the background historical information and an illustration. If possible, make copies of the cookbook for each student to take home.

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Food labels from jars and cans from several Brooklyn food markets.

Open air market, Borough Park Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Amy Curtis.*

Ethnic Foodways in Brooklyn Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods, just like families, reflect their ethnic backgrounds partly through the foods sold, prepared, and eaten by their inhabitants. Brooklyn's ethnic diversity is a key factor in the variety of exotic, pungent, flavorful foods sold and eaten on its streets, and in its restaurants and homes. On any given day, you can eat Polish pastry (Chruscik) or Arabic pita bread for breakfast, Jamaican jerk pork or Sicilian pizza for lunch, and enjoy Chinese take-out or a Russian banquet for dinner . . . not to mention hundreds of other delectables from around the world.

You may not realize how many foods you've eaten right in your own neighborhood that are indigenous to other countries.

Activities

Neighborhood Food Search Take a class walk to find examples of traditional ethnic foods in your neighborhood. If you have a camera, bring it along; photography is an important tool for documenting local history and folklore.

Use Activity Sheet #5 to jot down your discoveries.

Food Shop Exploration Break into smaller groups for this activity. Choose an ethnic food shop that you discovered on your walk. Go inside and look around. Notice what is on the shelves, counter tops, in display cases, and written on packages.

Jot down some of the information you gathered. Buy a sample for everyone to taste back in the classroom.

What are some of the products sold?

Choose a product that intrigues you.

Read the label.

What are the ingredients—anything unusual?

Where did the ingredients come from?

How do you think this food was prepared?

What kind of package is it sold in?

When do you think it is eaten?

What else would you eat with it?

Store front, Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Amy Curtis.*

Back in the Classroom

Discuss your exploration at the food shop.

- Which ingredients are common to which ethnic groups?
- Which foods are the most unusual?

Taste some of the sample products . . . what do you like best? Least?

Make a collage of packages, labels, photographs and drawings of ethnic foods. Divide the collage into sections by nationality or by type of food or ingredients.

Restaurant Exploration

Break into smaller groups for this activity as well. Have students choose an ethnic restaurant to explore this type of cuisine. Make arrangements

Some questions:

Which is your favorite recipe?

How is it made?

What ingredients are in it?

Where do the ingredients come from?

How did you learn how to cook this recipe?

Do you cook other kinds of foods as well? Like what?

to interview a chef who works there. Try to find out about the type of food he/she specializes in, his/her background, and how he/she came to be a chef.

Ask the chef if you may take a photograph of him/her for a class booklet.

Ask to see a menu. Make a list of some ethnic foods offered.
Interview the chef. Use the questions to the left as a guide.

Back in the Classroom

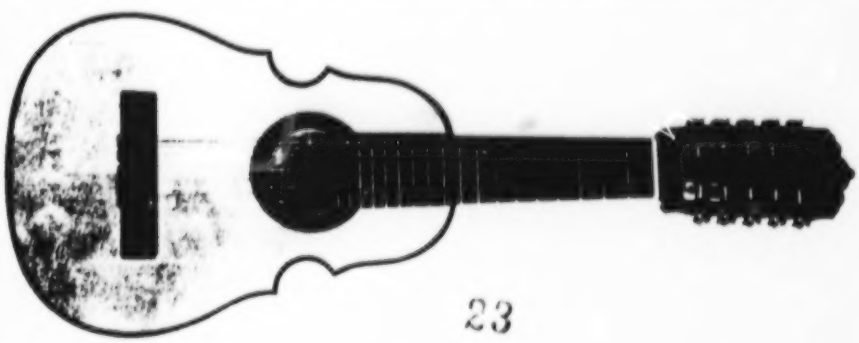
Write up a summary of what you found out from the chef you interviewed. Include the picture of your chef if you took one, and paste it to the top or bottom of the summary.

Compile all the summaries into a booklet for the class.

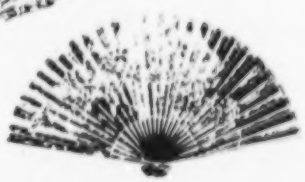
Folk Art: Our Material Memories

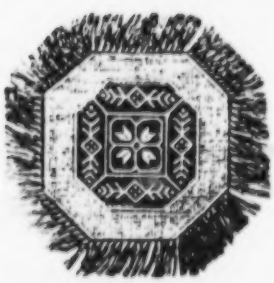
Can you think of anything in your home or community that has been around for many years, perhaps even for generations? Did any of these objects originate in another country, either that of your own ethnic background or of a previous owner? Does this traditional object perform a useful function? Is it simply a beautiful decoration?

A rosemalled plate, a seder plate, a cuatro, and a string of African beads are some examples that Brooklynites might find at home. One can also think of traditions that include song lyrics, utensils used to prepare



The Cuatro, a traditional Puerto Rican instrument, designed and made by William del Pilar, Jr., at his shop on Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Historical Society.*





Try to find out:

What is it?

What does it look like (material, colors, etc.)?

Where is it from?

Why and When is it used?

Who uses it?

Who made it?

How is it used?

special foods, or characters from legends such as the Coqui, a frog from a Hispanic legend. Such traditional objects and countless others that might be found at home can reveal the cultural heritage of Brooklynites as vividly as any other genre of folklore.

Activities

Locating Traditional Objects Ask your students to look around at home or in their neighborhood for a traditional object, preferably one that reflects their own ethnic heritage. Have them ask their parents for suggestions. Be flexible! A photograph of an object or a recording may be used as long as it in some way represents a cultural tradition.

Students may interview their parents about the object they have chosen. Find out such information as:

- Where is it from?
- What is it used for?
- What are some changes in the tradition over the years?

Back in the Classroom

Have students bring their objects to class and share what they have learned about them.

Explore one another's objects. Focus on two objects that other students have brought in.

Use Activity Sheet #6 to record information about the objects.

Ask students how they got their information about the objects. Was it from previous knowledge? Observation? A more knowledgable person? Is there anything else they would like to know about any of the objects they explored? How could they find out the answers?

Exhibit the objects Have the students write labels for the objects they brought in. Decide, as a class, how the objects might be displayed; i.e., by ethnic origin, function, material, etc.

Display the objects and invite another class to view the exhibition.

Folk Art and Artists

Some of the objects the students brought in may be handmade, but given today's modern culture, they may also be mass-produced versions of an old tradition. While not the norm today, many living folk artists and craftspeople enjoy the process of creating traditional objects and music themselves. The *process* of creating these objects is, in fact, as much a folk tradition as are the finished products themselves.

There are many active folk artists in Brooklyn who spend their time—as either hobby or livelihood—making things from their own ethnic background. One Brooklynite who takes special pride in her Scandinavian heritage is Doris Jensen, a resident of Bay Ridge. Jensen practices the Norwegian art of rosemaling, or painting on wood.

Brooklynite William del Pilar, Jr. is a resident of Atlantic Avenue and a master of the Puerto Rican tradition of cuatro making. The cuatro is a musical instrument like a guitar, symbolizing the culture of the jibaros, people from the mountains of Puerto Rico.

Do you know any folk artists or craftspeople? There may be some right in your neighborhood or school community—teachers, or even your students' parents or grandparents.

Muslim Family Day in Prospect Park being celebrated on the last day of Ramadan by an impromptu group of musicians. Photograph by Martha Cooper City Lore, 1990.

Activities

Ask a folk artist to visit your classroom. In addition to the suggestions listed above, you might try a local cultural organization, senior center, or other special interest group; in these communities, people naturally congregate and bring together their talents and hobbies.

Be open-minded: traditional folk arts range from sewing and weaving, to singing and dancing, to puppetry and jewelry-making . . . to mention just a few.

Have the students think of questions they will ask the folk artist in order to learn as much as they can about their work.

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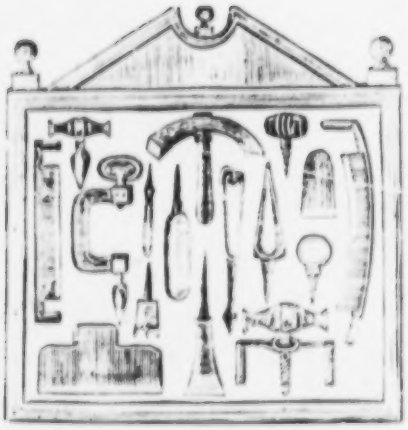
Folk artist Doris Jenson, a Bay Ridge resident, demonstrates rosemaling, the Scandinavian art of painting on wood. *Photograph by Kathleen Condon.*

The list might include:

- Where does this art/craft/song come from?
- Who started it?
- What is the object produced used for?
- How long does it take to make the object?
- What tools and materials do you use? Where do you get them?
- How did you get interested in this art/craft/music?
- How did you learn it? Where? When?
- Do members of your family or community practice this same form of art/craft/music?
- What do you like best about doing this art/craft/music?
- What is the hardest thing about it?



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Festivals and Folklore

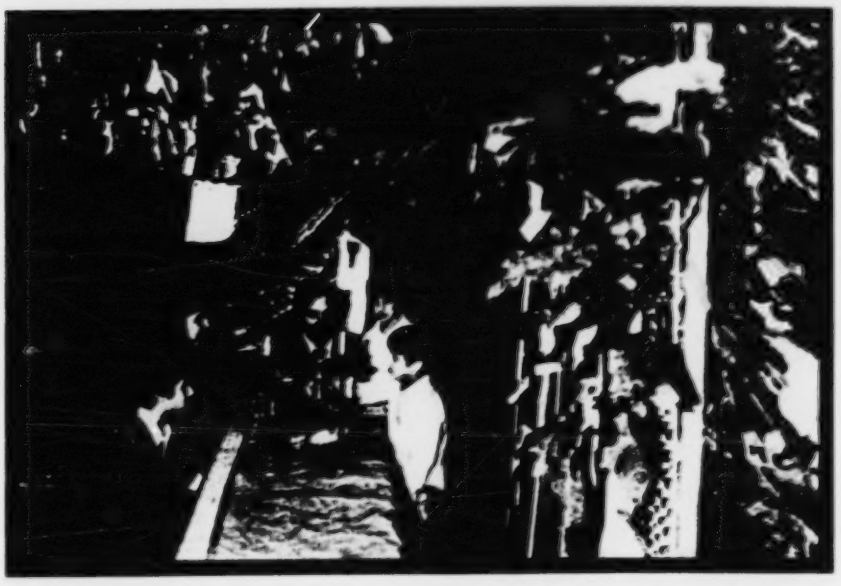
Christmas ◆ Halloween ◆ Sukkot ◆ Three Kings Day ◆ Purim
Giglio Carnival ◆ St. Patricks Day ◆ Sakura Matsuri

Do you and your students recognize some or all of these festivals? Chances are, you or people you know participate in one or more celebrations during the year. Ask your students why there are so many festivals; are they useful or simply fun?

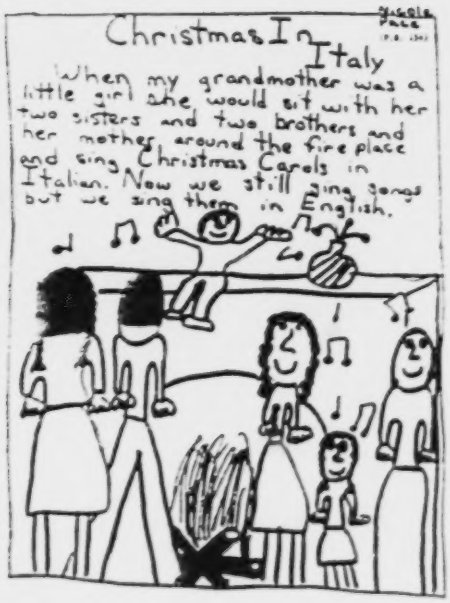
Festivals enable folk groups to express and enjoy their traditions. They provide a time and place for people to come together in celebration of their cultures. There is usually no other opportunity to express their traditions as a group on a daily basis.

Some festivals are celebrated in the home, with the immediate or extended family. Thanksgiving is typically celebrated at home. Others are celebrated throughout a community, either in one particular neighborhood, or all over the city. Many of Brooklyn's ethnic groups have community festivals. Festivals can celebrate religious events (think of some of the holidays or "holy days" you know of). Others affirm the history and traditions of a culture. Brooklyn is the site for all kinds of festivals, year-round.

Crown Heights is home to the largest West Indian population



A family dining in a Sukkah, a temporary structure built in backyards and terraces as part of the week long celebration of the Jewish holiday, Sukkot.
Photograph by Roberta Grobel Intrater.


Christmas In Italy
When my grandmother was a little girl she would sit with her two sisters and two brothers and her mother around the fire place and sing Christmas Carols in Italian. Now we still sing songs but we sing them in English.

outside the West Indies. The annual West Indian-American Day Carnival recreates the Caribbean Carnival along Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights. The three days of festivities include a costumed parade and other spectacles that celebrate the customs and history of the Caribbean. Originally scheduled during the winter months, the festival now takes place on Labor Day Weekend, adapting to Brooklyn's climate.

Sukkot is a celebration that has both religious and non-religious meanings. It is the Jewish celebration of the fall harvest as well as the wandering of the people of Israel through the desert. For this holiday, people in Jewish communities build small ritual huts in their yards or on their stoops and fire escapes. While traditionally made of straw and other natural materials, today's huts often use nylon, colored tinsel and store-bought decorations.

Adapting traditions to the modern world is an important element of festivals. Your students may have encountered other examples of adaptation and change in traditions, such as in their "Foodways" exploration.

Family Celebration

A good place to start exploring festivals is right at home.

Ask the students what they do on Thanksgiving. Are there traditions all students have in common? Are there students whose families eat or do more atypical things on Thanksgiving? Does *everyone* celebrate Thanksgiving?

Have the students choose a holiday they celebrate at home and complete the "Family Celebration" Activity Sheet #7 to find out about the range of festival-related folklore of the classroom population. (Encourage the children to choose from a *wide range* of holidays so that many are represented.)

Back in the Classroom

Discuss students' activity sheets. Look for common and uncommon traditions within the same holidays. For example, does everyone eat

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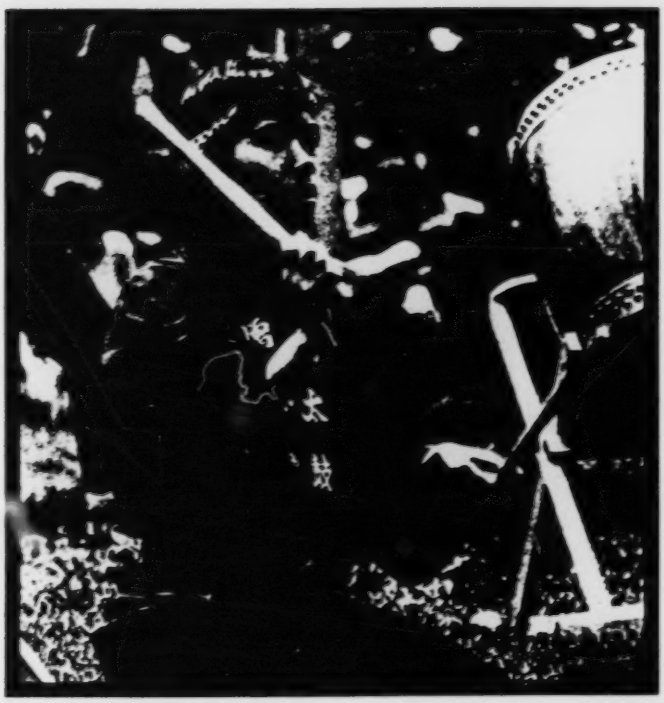

Sakura Matsuri, the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival held in May each year at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. *Photograph by Roberta Grobel Intrater.*

turkey on Thanksgiving? What other meals are eaten on this holiday? Is this even a meaningful holiday for every student? Why or why not?

Have children bring in things related to the holidays they have researched: Recipes, photographs, decorations, cards, songs, etc. Display these things in the classroom along with the children's completed activity sheets.

Holidays in the Neighborhood

Sometimes holidays celebrated by communities in your neighborhood are the same as those you celebrate with your family. Others reflect the traditions expressed by Brooklynites of other ethnic groups. It is interesting to find similarities and differences not only among the different types of holidays celebrated, but also among ways in which the same holidays are celebrated by different people.

Things to notice:

What are some of the signs you see that indicate an upcoming holiday?

Where do you see them? (Posters? Shop windows? Front lawns?)

What are they made of?

Activities

Neighborhood Walk Go on a class walk around the neighborhood. Look for signs of an upcoming holiday. Think about ways in which you

will be recording and documenting your observations. Note-taking? Photography? Sketching?

The Mexican festival of the Virgin of Guadelupe at the Church of All Saints, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Tony Velez.*

Back in the classroom

Have a discussion about the neighborhood walk. Compare the holiday traditions found to the family holiday traditions the students documented.

Class Festival

Have all the students vote on a reason to have a class festival. What would you want to celebrate? Remember, in order for this to be a *folk* festival, it must relate to everyone in the class; this is the folk group, just like a group that is made up of people from a particular ethnic background.

Some possible reasons to have a festival might be:

The beginning of Spring (What are some traditional holidays that celebrate seasonal beginnings?)

The completion of a school project (Have students acknowledge themselves and one another for a job well-done.)

A winter snowstorm (Natural phenomena often bring people together; everyone is affected!)

Plan the festival. Decide upon what foods, clothing, activities, decorations, songs, etc. would be appropriate for the festival. Whom would you invite? Where and when will it be? Set the date and get to work!

Remember, in true folklorist tradition, someone should document this event for future folklorists and local classroom historians. Take photographs, make audio and/or video recordings, write down recipes, song lyrics and costume patterns.

Have Fun!

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The Built Environment: Streets, Stoops and Storefronts

Have you ever seen an old photograph of your neighborhood? Chances are, it looked very different than it does today. Most things in the urban environment, whether dating from 100, 50, or even just 10 years ago, have undergone changes or given way completely to new elements that make up our changing society.

Stoops and cast iron railings, landmarks and remainders of 19th century Brooklyn. *The Brooklyn Historical Society.*

Streets that were once paved with cobblestones are now covered over. Advertisements that were painted on brick facades have been replaced by neon and billboards, and their buildings given a fresh coat of paint. Yet by looking closely at our modern urban environment, we can often find signs of the past peeking through the streets and structures of the present. Once in a while, an old cobblestone will emerge from an eroding section of pavement; we see faded lettering advertising a brand of gloves no longer manufactured, but worn by your grandparents in old photographs.

Looking carefully and finding clues to your neighborhood's history is like fitting together the pieces of a puzzle. The more you find, the more you can make sense of the entire picture. This entire picture, ever changing, forms the physical and social context of your life. By exploring elements and changes in our surroundings, students will better understand not only their own local history, but also the concept that history is everywhere, made everyday by everyone.

Activities

Neighborhood Walk #1: Looking for the Character of Your Neighborhood Take a class walk around different areas of your neighborhood. Observe the buildings, signs, and people's behaviors. What are some features that distinguish this neighborhood from every other?

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Use the following questions to guide your exploration:

- What kind of residential buildings are there (single-family homes; projects; high-rises?)
- What kind of businesses are there (factories; shops; banks?)
- What areas are used for recreation (parks; waterfront; malls; museums?)
- Where do people "hang out?"
- Where is it most crowded? Least crowded? What accounts for the differences in density?
- Are buildings close together? Far apart?
- How do people get around?

Neighborhood Map Represent your exploration visually. Have each student draw a general map of the neighborhood. Then fill it in with symbols and colored areas to represent the unique features of the neighborhood.

For example:

Color:	**Draw symbols:**
residential areas yellow	stores:
business areas blue	restaurants:
recreation areas green	iron works:
	subway entrances:

Compile students' maps to make one large map for the classroom.

Neighborhood Walk #2: Looking for Change Over Time in the Built Environment Find the history of your neighborhood. Take a class walk to some of the older sections of town. Where are the oldest sections? Many Brooklyn neighborhoods grew up around the waterfront. Others spread out from a central shopping district, subway line, or manufacturing center.

Choose a section or two on which to focus with your class. As on other walks, decide how you will document your findings. You might take maps of the neighborhood and mark down the locations of anything old and interesting you find.

Things to notice on your walk:

On buildings: Cast iron grill work; fire escapes; painted signs and advertisements; dates (on corner-stones or sides of building, or on metal plaques). What building materials are used?

On the sidewalk: Names of companies set in cement; dates on manhole covers, lamp posts, railings and fences.

In the street: Cobblestones and trolley tracks.

Adoquines in Sunset Park, molded iron slag blocks that travelled first as ballast from Spain to Puerto Rico in 1600. From there, they made their way to Brooklyn, around 1900, as ballast for ships carrying sugar cane to a Brooklyn refinery. ***The Brooklyn Historical Society, photograph by Tony Velez.***

Types of buildings and structures also indicate not only their ages but the changing populations of a neighborhood. What are the places of worship in your neighborhood? Have there been any changes over the years? For example, you might find a church that used to be a Jewish synagogue. An old candy store may be right next door to a Bodega or a Korean market. How do these juxtapositions reflect the growth and history of your neighborhood and of Brooklyn as a whole?

Research Project Divide the class into groups to document and research the history of different features of the neighborhood. These features might include housing, warehouses, manufacturing, transportation, schools, or parks.

Sources for research might be: Historical societies, public libraries, the Borough President's office, local community centers, and most important, conversations with the *people* who live and work in the neighborhood.

Display and Present the research projects to parents or other classes.

And remember to *document* this exhibit for future class historians and folklorists!

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Zeitlin, Steven J., Amy J. Kotkin and Holly Cutting Baker. *A Celebration of American Family Folklore*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1982. A comprehensive overview of the study of family folklore and oral histories. Interview techniques and photography skills are described in detail. Case histories and photographs are included throughout. Recommended for adults as well.

Latimer, Margaret, ed. Brooklyn Almanac. New York: Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance. 1984.

General Resources

The Brooklyn Fact and Trivia Book

The Brooklyn Kids' Book

The Brooklyn Neighborhood Book

All three booklets are available free if you pick them up at:
Brooklyn: Fund for the Borough of Brooklyn Public Affairs Department
The Borough President's Office
209 Joralemon St.
3rd floor
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11201

You can send away for them by mail at $4 per copy at:
The Fund for the Borough of Brooklyn
16 Court Street
Suite 1400 West
Brooklyn, N.Y.
11241

Activity Sheet #1
Children's Games

1. One game I like to play is: _____

2. This is a . . .

   ☐ board game ☐ chase game

   ☐ card game ☐ word game

   ☐ street game ☐ ball game

   ☐ other _____

3. Number of players: minimum _____ maximum _____

4. Time of *year* this game is played: _____

   Time of *day* this game is played: _____

5. Equipment needed: _____

6. Describe where and how you get the equipment: _____

   _____

7. When did you learn to play (How old where you? What were the circumstances?) _____

   _____

   _____

8. How did you learn to play? (By reading instructions? By watching someone else play? By listening to someone explain the rules?)

   _____

   _____

9. What age player is this game meant for? _____

10. Ask your parents if they used to play this game. If so, how has the game changed over the years? (Were there different rules? Different equipment? A different name for the game?) _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Activity Sheet #2
My Family's Immigration History

Person I interviewed: _____

Relation to me: _____

1. **Who** in the family immigrated to this country? (You? Your parents? Your grandparents?) _____

_____

2. **When** did you (your parents, grandparents) come to this country? _____

3. **Where** did you (your parents, grandparents) come from?

_____

4. **Where** did you (your parents, grandparents) arrive in this country?

_____

5. **Why** did you (your parents, grandparents) immigrate?

_____

_____

6. **Why** did you (your parents, grandparents) settle in Brooklyn?

_____

_____

7. (Use a separate sheet of paper to write down answers to the following questions.)

Describe your (your parents, grandparents) experiences and impressions as a recent immigrant:

- How did you get here? (boat, plane, etc.)
- What was the trip itself like?
- How did you feel before you arrived? (scared, excited, etc.)
- What was your first impressions of the new country? Of Brooklyn? Of your new home?
- What things seemed very different at first?
- Did anything remind you of back home?
- Who were some of the first people you met here?
- Can you describe some memories of your first school or first job here?

Use this sheet to write up your responses to question #7.

Note:

These questions may spark other memories too. Don't hesitate to ask others if something interesting arises. Remember, the more you know of your family's past, the better you can understand your life today and that of people around you. And besides, you'll probably find that people enjoy the opportunity to talk about their own lives.

Activity Sheet #3
Interview Evaluation

It may be helpful to evaluate your interview afterwards. Think about ways you might do things differently the next time you conduct an oral history. Remember, part of family history is the transmission of information by word of mouth, so this will probably not be the last interview you do.

1. Person interviewed _____

2. Relationship to you _____

3. Describe this person's reaction to being interviewed. Were they enthusiastic, reserved, animated, thoughtful, wordy, suspicious, intrigued . . .? _____

4. Was there anything they said that was confusing to you?

5. What did you find most interesting or surprising? _____

6. What else would you have liked to learn from this person?

7. What might you do differently next time? _____

8. What would you do the same way? _____

Activity Sheet #4
A Family Food Tradition

Recipe for: _____

Name of person who shared this recipe with you: _____

Relation to you: _____

Recipe

Ingredients

Directions

History of Recipe

Sample questions to ask about the history of your recipe:

Where did you (person being interviewed) learn this recipe?

How old is it?

Who makes it the best?

When is it served? (Every day? Snacks? Special occasions?)

Where is it eaten? (Home? Picnics? On the street?)

From what country did this recipe originate?

How is it served?

Do you know any variations of the recipe?

How has the recipe changed over the years?

Afterwards, see how this interview compares to the one you did on your family's immigration history. Ask yourself the same questions to evaluate the interview process. What was different, what was more successful, less successful than last time? What do you think accounts for the differences?

Activity Sheet #5
Sample Neighborhood Food Search Sheet

Date _____

Neighborhood _____

Restaurants I Saw:

Name	Type of Food

Food Shops I Saw:

Name	Type of Food

Street Vendors I Saw:

(What are some prepared foods you notice people eating around your neighborhood—pizza, felafel, etc.?)

Activity Sheet #6
Traditional Folk Objects

	Object #1	Object #2
What is it?		
What is it made of?		
Who made it?		
Where is it from?		
What is it used for?		
Who uses it?		
How is it used?		
Draw it.		

Activity Sheet #7
A Family Celebration

My family celebrates: _____

It usually takes place in (month/season): _____

1. Describe what you know about the meaning of this festival or holiday. Why do you celebrate it? _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Make a list of the following traditions your family observes on this holiday.

- Special preparations (cleaning, setting up, etc.)

- Clothing worn (Who wears what?)

- Foods Prepared (Who makes what?)

- Games played (Who plays what?)

- Stories told (Who tells, who listens?)

- Decorations made or bought (Who makes them, who buys them, who puts them up?)

3. Choose one of these six categories, or any other you've chosen, and describe it in more detail on the next page.

4. Illustrate one aspect of your celebration (a picture of food, or of clothing worn, or words to a song, etc.)

Suggestions for part 3:

For example for "*Decorations*," discuss things like:

- What are they made of?
- Where do you get them or the materials to make them?
- What colors, shapes, sizes do they come in?
- How are they assembled?
- Have there been any changes in this kind of decoration over the years?
- Is this a popular tradition among others who celebrate this holiday, or is it unique to your family?
- What are the origins of this kind of decoration?
- Does it have any symbolic meanings?

Acknowledgements

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